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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9470
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 2197
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1945
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 1339
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1773
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS PORT AU PRINCE 000115

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
S/CRS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: HAITI MONTHLY: JANUARY 2009

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 1677

11. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified -- please protect accordingly.

12. (U) Summary: This is a monthly report on various political topics of interest which do not merit a full reporting cable. End summary.

13. (SBU) ARISTIDE FOUNDATION'S UNIVERSITY TO REOPEN WITH CUBAN FACULTY. Toussaint Hilaire, Director of the Aristide Foundation, announced January 12 that the University of the Aristide Foundation is now accepting students for one-year intensive Spanish courses as a prelude to reopening its departments of medicine, agronomy and communications. Once proficient in Spanish, students will be taught in that language by Cuban professors. The Foundation's officials recently regained control of the university, which opened in 2001 but was occupied by U.S. and then MINUSTAH forces after the departure of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004 (reftel). The university will charge a nominal fee to register, he added. Hilaire told Poloff in December that the Aristide Foundation had worked with Cuban doctors to provide health care to over 1,500 impoverished Haitians in 2008.

14. (SBU) PARLIAMENT PASSES ANTI-KIDNAPPING LEGISLATION. Parliament passed legislation during the last week of January that toughens penalties for kidnapping. Kidnappers in Haiti who receive ransom payments will face life in prison if convicted. While the stiffer penalties are meant to deter kidnapping, Haiti's weak judicial system will limit the law's effectiveness.

15. (U) UP IN SMOKE. The week of January 19, a building housing key Customs Authority records burned, destroying much of the paper and computerized documentation. The case is still under investigation as the police determine whether the building was intentionally destroyed by arsonists or an accident caused by faulty electrical wiring.

16. (U) MARITIME MIGRANT INTERDICTION BECOMES BIG NEWS. On January 29 the U.S. Coast Guard returned 242 interdicted migrants, rescued from a sinking sail freighter, to Port-au-Prince. This was the first time in recent memory that Haitian media covered repatriation. Media broadcast emotional interviews with passengers clearly traumatized by their scrape with death. The Embassy's press officer also gave TV and radio interviews emphasizing the dangers of illegal seaborne migration. Against the backdrop of an up

tick in FY '09 migrant boat interdictions, two Poloff and one Conoff attended the repatriation to watch operations and conduct interviews.

17. (SBU) FUGITIVE DRUG TRAFFICKER ARRESTED. The Counternarcotics Unit (BLTS) of the Haitian National Police arrested drug trafficker Reginald Fleurimond on January 23 without incident. Since the state of New York had a warrant for his arrest, BLTS transferred him to DEA custody, which flew him to that jurisdiction.
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